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Strong Information Act Supported at Hearing

WASHINGTON, July 14 (AP) — Ed Asner, the actor, and representatives of news agencies urged Congress today to withstand an assault they said was intended to weaken the 15-year-old Freedom of Information Act.

"Don't let anybody weaken the F.O.I.A. Don't let anybody get exempted from the F.O.I.A. Just make all the Federal agencies abide by the F.O.I.A.," Mr. Asner, who plays the title role of a newspaper editor on television's "Lou Grant," told a House government operations subcommittee.

Mr. Asner accused the Reagan Administration of starting an attack on the law in a memorandum by Attorney General William French Smith in May. Mr. Smith said that Government officials no longer had to prove that "demonstrable harm" would result in order to justify withholding information requested under the act.

Mr. Asner, speaking for the Fund for Open Information and Accountability, said, "The Attorney General's actions appeared to us to be the first step in the Reagan Administration's effort to repeal or severely weaken the F.O.I.A."

Bob Schieffer, CBS national news correspondent representing Sigma Delta Chi, the journalism society, urged the subcommittee to overrule Mr. Smith and "restore the proper emphasis favoring presumption for disclosure."